



Minnesota Congressional
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News Release

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Klobuchar, Kline Bipartisan Legislation to Ensure National Guard and Reserve's Ability to Assist Victims of Sexual Assault Passes Senate, Heads to President's Desk to Be Signed Into Law

The Army has released a directive expanding important legal services to certain victims of military sexual assault, but the directive fails to cover Guard members who become victims of sexual assault outside of their drill weekend or military duty

The bipartisan bill – which Klobuchar introduced in the Senate with Senator Kelly Ayotte and Kline introduced in the House – would ensure survivors of sexual assault receive support services if there is any connection between the crime and their service

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar and Representative John Kline today announced that their bipartisan legislation to ensure the National Guard and Reserve's ability to assist victims of sexual assault passed the Senate as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and now heads to the President's desk to be signed into law. The Army has released a directive expanding important legal services to certain victims of military sexual assault, but the directive fails to cover Guard members who become victims of sexual assault outside of their drill weekend or military duty. The lawmakers' bipartisan bill – which Klobuchar introduced in the Senate with Senator Kelly Ayotte and Kline introduced in the House – would ensure survivors of sexual assault receive support services if there is any connection between the

crime and their service. The bill would require the relevant service secretary to provide Special Victims Counsel to the member regardless of when the assault occurred.

“Our National Guard and Reserve members make enormous sacrifices to keep us safe,” Klobuchar said. “This bipartisan bill will ensure that these servicemembers have access to the support and resources they need if they become victims of sexual assault, and today’s action means this important legislation will now become law.”

“Our Minnesota service members should not be impeded from seeking critical services in the aftermath of a sexual assault,” said Kline, a 25-year veteran of the U.S. Marines. “This legislation is a good example of what can happen when we roll up our sleeves and work in a bipartisan way on behalf of the constituents we serve. I was pleased to author legislation and work with Sen. Klobuchar to ensure our Guard members receive the same services available to other service members.”

“The Sexual Assault provision of the National Defense Authorization Act will establish a new and important legal resource for victims,” said Maj. Gen. Rick Nash, the Adjutant General of the Minnesota National Guard. “Currently, members of the National Guard who are sexually assaulted while not on duty cannot access special victims counsel services, which provide legal assistance. Under this new provision, specially-trained counsels will provide legal advice and representation to the victim.”

After the Army released its directive, Klobuchar and Kline led a letter signed by Minnesota’s entire Congressional Delegation calling on the U.S. Army to ensure that the Minnesota National Guard can fully assist victims of sexual assault regardless of when the assault occurred. In a letter to Secretary of the Army John McHugh, Minnesota’s congressional delegation raised concerns that the lack of clarity around the new directive could undermine the Minnesota National Guard’s ability to effectively provide support services to survivors of sexual assaults.

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